

4 May 1981
MAU-1036

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report - Austrian Bureau - April 1981

I. GENERAL

The bureau's main contribution to bring all nonstaff alien employee positions into conformity with State Department and local Embassy classification and pay schedules was completed in April. New, rewritten position descriptions for all 22 authorized monitor positions and 12 others including associate editor, electronics technicians, teletypists and administrative assistants were completed on 16 and 23 April according to State's "Local Employee Position Classification Handbook" format and submitted to the Embassy Personnel Officer for review and transmittal to State's alien personnel classification office. Copies of the more than 120 pages were also pouched in advance to the Special Assistant to the Chief, Operations Group, for review and use in ongoing negotiations with State on FBIS position standards. By early May the Personnel Officer reported she still had not completed her review or passed them on, due to the large volume of material and the press of other work.

Bureau output in April reached near the all-time record of 790,200 words set in March 1971, with monitors producing 721,850 words (the norm is about 500,000) despite several extended illnesses in monitorial and editorial ranks. Contributing to the high output was a record 104,650 words on the Polish crisis translated by the two Polish press monitors [redacted] having been pressed into full-time Polish work to assist [redacted] after BBC agreed to take over Kiev and Alma-Ata radio and Headquarters the Ukrainian press), as well as abnormally large figures for other language teams caused by a series of party congresses--Bulgarian 148,150, East Germany 86,300, and Czech/Slovak 77,190 and 12,780 respectively. Monitors from several bureau teams pitched in on a lengthy (54 takes) and difficult SED congress report by Erich Honecker that was twice as long as the radio version, after a senior German monitor went on extended sick leave.

Consumer interest in bureau television monitoring remained very high, and the second highest number of videocassettes ever--38, compared with the record 43 in March--were pouched to Headquarters consumers, including 23 from Yugoslavia, 14 from Czechoslovakia and one from Hungary. The bureau initiated a requisition for additional

ST
ST

videocassettes to keep stocks at retention levels, since additional ad hoc coverage of Austrian television has also begun producing useful material on relations with East Europe.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. American Embassy Belgrade advised the bureau in late April that a replacement television recording contractor, Mrs.

[redacted]
[redacted] the first Belgrade TV contractor, who is leaving on 8 May, and had begun overlap training on 21 April. By prior arrangement, the FBIS television equipment will be moved from the Embassy housing compound quarters of [redacted] to the new location, also in the same housing compound, by the [redacted] saving FBIS a trip at this time. The bureau chief sent a commendatory letter to the Political Counselor in Belgrade on behalf of [redacted] Following the unrest in Yugoslavia's southern, Albanian minority Kosovo province, additional recordings of the Pristina Albanian-language television newscasts were laid on the contractor for a 12-day period, then discontinued for low yield.

2. The Pristina/Kosovo disturbances and youth riots that killed and injured some 40 persons in early April also led to additional Pristina regional radio coverage in both Albanian and Serbo-Croatian, and a growing exchange of polemics between Albania's press and the Yugoslav radio and press sources, culminating in a 75-minute speech on 27 April by Kosovo leader Failj Hodza denouncing demonstrators and Albania's attitude.

3. Considerable additional and intensive Vienna technical staff work was required in mid-April to feed and service the normal VCVC audio channel for BBC monitoring plus an additional leased phone line 5-11 April during the Czechoslovak party congress, which coincided with intensive activity and interest in Poland. The additional line--normally used by BBC's booking a single phone call to receive signals from its remote-control RACAL receiver--proved to be of low quality, and last-minute arrangements had to be reversed so that Vienna fed Czech programs via the VCVC, while all other regular programs had to be recorded and fed via the leased phone line with constant manual intervention. The last-minute initial arrangement and discovery of the unreliable quality of the leased short-term line generated a great deal of extra coordination messages and confusion (which may have been why FCS in April decided it no longer wishes to receive drop copies of such exchanges for "educational value"). After the dust had settled, BBC sent a message expressing thanks for the "splendid effort under very considerable pressure" by Vienna's technical staff, which BBC said "helped us enormously" on party congress and backup Warsaw radio coverage.

4. Vienna began feeding BBC a new Prague in Polish radio program daily after cruising efforts at BBC, Cologne and Vienna resulted in BBC finding the new service, despite bad Caversham reception. The new service was considered particularly important because of a similar pattern in 1968 preceding the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.

B. Communications

The bureau Autodin Mode V circuit was out of service for 7:12, with 1,110 words filed via the London VCVC altroute during April; Pirmasens ASC reported only 1:02 as downtime. For the fourth straight month of 1981 the teletype section had a CIM error rate below 2 percent, earning still another performance certificate.

C. Lateral Services

The bureau provided special service to the Embassy political officer escorting a U.S. Congressional delegation visiting Vienna and the Laxenburg International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, in connection with local press allegations that two institute officials--one of whom resigned protesting his innocence--were Soviet KGB agents. Despite their heavy workload, the bureau Polish team translated two letters from Polish refugees in Austria sent to the Embassy for the Regional Security Officer. At his request, service to the ICA Press Officer in the form of the bureau's entire East European outgoing and incoming file was dropped; the press officer had few correspondent requests, he said.

D. Technical

Increasing breakdowns or poor-quality recording & playback with Panasonic cassette recorders led to a request to Headquarters for six replacements, and a visit to the local service representative and purchase of a few spares to determine if some can be repaired on a cost-effective basis. A bureau test panel specifically designed for repairs, tests and checks on BBC's remote Lanier recorders was modified so it can handle all bureau audio cassette and reel recorders. Technical staff replaced a smaller, older multicoupler rack with a larger one to accommodate newly received multicouplers and allow for future expansion. Local inquiries about new, improved facsimile transmitting equipment to replace that used since September 1978 for faxing Soviet press articles to London PMU, the initial lease for which expires in January 1982, turned up no significantly better gear.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

The bureau's only associate editor, [REDACTED] returned to duty 21 April after approximately 6 months of AL/SL/LWOP, working part time 25 hours weekly, following the birth of son Andrew last October.

IV. VISITS

From the bureau: the bureau chief attended the annual FBIS bureau chiefs' conference in Washington 27 April-1 May.

[REDACTED]
Chief, FBIS Austrian Bureau

Attachments:

Publishable Wordage Report
Production Report
Engineering Attachment
Nonstaff Personnel Report

cc: Chief, FBIS London Bureau